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The Ineffective and Unchanging Drug Strategy

I. Introduction. President Bush announced his National Drug Control Strategy on September 5, 1989.<sup>1</sup> It emphasized a multinational and multi-agency approach to attack both the supply and demand aspects of illegal drug use in the United States. On September 18, 1989, Secretary of Defense (SecDef) Cheney issued implementing counterdrug strategy for the Department of Defense (DoD).<sup>2</sup> He determined that a principal foreign policy objective is the reduction, and if possible, elimination of the flow of illegal narcotic substances into the US. Based upon this finding, in combination with DoD's statutory responsibilities<sup>3</sup> to support law enforcement agencies, he identified the countering of the production, trafficking, and use of illegal drugs as a high priority national security mission.

At almost the exact same time that the war against drugs heated up, the cold war ended. Soon after SecDef announced his

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Weinraub, "President Offers Strategy for US on Drug Control," New York Times, 6 Sept. 1989, A1; "Text of President's Speech on National Drug Control Strategy," New York Times, 6 Sept. 1989, B6.

<sup>2</sup> Secretary of Defense letter of 18 Sept. 1989, "Department of Defense Guidance for Implementation of the President's National Drug Control Strategy."

<sup>3</sup> Under title 10, United States Code, § 124 (1988), DoD is the lead agency for the detection and monitoring of drug smuggling into the US, in support of Federal, state, local, and foreign law enforcement agencies. Additionally, under title 10 United States Code, §§ 371-374 (1988), a variety of different types of support to law enforcement can be provided by the military.

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drug strategy, the Berlin wall tumbled down. The cold war and DoD's war on drugs share a common strategy - they both rely on the security assistance program to achieve their goals. Security assistance in the cold war was largely successful, but in spite of best intentions, it has not been successful as a strategy in DoD's drug war. Its continued use is based not upon a rational policy, but rather on organizational process and bureaucratic politics.

II. Strategy. SecDef's concept of operations in the drug war is to conduct a defense in depth at three tiers. The tier of defense closest to home targets drugs at and within US borders, supporting domestic law enforcement agencies primarily by using the military's technological capabilities. The second tier of defense is the detection, monitoring, and reporting of suspected drug trafficking to the US from the air and sea.

The third tier of defense attacks drugs at their source, especially in the Andean nations of Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru. These countries are the source and shipment origination points of virtually all the cocaine that comes into the US.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, the US cannot enforce drug laws in those nations. The strategy and rationale is that cocaine production and transshipment to the US will be reduced by strengthening those nations' political and institutional capabilities to disrupt drug trafficking, improving their law enforcement effectiveness, and helping to overcome the

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<sup>4</sup> National Narcotics Intelligence Consumers Committee Report, 1991, The Supply of Illicit Drugs to the United States, July 1992, Washington, D.C., Drug Enforcement Administration, 14-17.

disruptive economic effects of removing coca production as a major source of income in their agrarian societies.<sup>5</sup>

Cooperation by these source nations is not without cost. Their greatest incentive to help the US in its fight against drugs is US military and economic assistance available under the security assistance program.

III. Security Assistance.<sup>6</sup> Security assistance is not an invention of the war on drugs. It is a collection of programs that was developed during the cold war to counter the Soviet goal of communist expansion through internal revolution.<sup>7</sup> It seeks to improve the capability of US security partners to deter and defend against aggression, to shoulder more of the common defense burden, to promote regional stability, to strengthen economies, and to foster human rights and democratic values.<sup>8</sup>

The Secretary of State is responsible for policy decisions and general direction of security assistance, while the Defense

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<sup>5</sup> Honorable Stephen M. Duncan, DoD Coordinator for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support, Statement at Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Investigations, House Armed Services Committee, 29 Apr. 1992. Washington D.C., Office of the DoD Coordinator for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Security assistance is authorized under title 22, United States Code, § 2378 et. seq.

<sup>7</sup> General Accounting Office, Security Assistance, Observations on Post Cold-War Program Changes, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 30 Sept. 1992, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Departments of State and Defense, Congressional Presentation for Security Assistance Programs, Fiscal Year 1993, Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 4-5.

Security Assistance Agency (DSAA), on behalf of SecDef, is responsible for its military implementation. There are three specific, relevant security assistance programs: Foreign Military Financing (FMF), primarily a grant program which enables allies to acquire US equipment, services, and training; Economic Support Fund (ESF), an all grant program administered by the Department of State's Agency for International Development (AID) which encourages economic reform and development, and International Military Education and Training (IMET), which exposes military and civilian officials to democratic values through professional military education and training.<sup>9</sup>

The dissolution of the Soviet Union should have significantly undercut the security assistance program since its underlying major premise, the containment of communism, is no longer valid. In spite of this, funding levels of security assistance have not dramatically changed. Instead, there has been a change in program emphasis towards supporting democracies, an equally meritorious goal. As a collateral matter, there has also been a redirection of security assistance funds to support counterdrug programs.<sup>10</sup> Examples of military security assistance in the drug war are training police and military units in individual and small unit tactics, leadership, airmobile and river operations. US equipment and training in the operation and maintenance of US equipment is

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<sup>9</sup> DoS/DoD, Security Assistance Programs, 1993, 4.

<sup>10</sup> GAO, Post Cold-War Security Assistance, 14-15.

also provided.<sup>11</sup> Those sorts of assistance are useful in improving the law enforcement capability of Andean Ridge nations.

#### IV. Data

A. Security Assistance. Table 1 demonstrates that security assistance for Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru expanded significantly in fiscal year 1990, immediately after SecDef announced DoD's strategy.

Table 1

Security Assistance<sup>12</sup>  
(\$ thousands)

	<u>1993#</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1989*</u>	<u>1988*</u>	<u>1987*</u>
<u>Bolivia</u>							
FMF	40,000	40,000	35,000	39,228	5000	0	1000
ESF	0	25,000	76,750	20,163	25,000	8320	7500
IMET	900	900	899	552	400	400	196
<u>Colombia</u>							
FMF	58,000	58,000	27,055	71,730	7100	3044	3500
ESF	0	0	49,750	0	5000	0	0
IMET	2200	2300	2593	1500	1000	1246	1479
<u>Peru</u> <sup>13</sup>							
FMF	34,000	39,000	23,950	1000	2500	0	0
ESF	0	0	60,000	3286	2000	500	5333
IMET	740	900	524	458	520	421	147

# 1993 Proposed, 1992 Estimated.

\* Prior to 1990, the precursor of FMF was the Military Assistance Program.

B. Measures of success. Table 2 reveals indicators of success in the attack of drugs at their source. There are various

<sup>11</sup> Honorable Stephen M. Duncan, Statement, 8.

<sup>12</sup> Extracts from DoS/DoD, Security Assistance Programs, 1988 through 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Peru's administration did not agree with the US emphasis of law enforcement in military aid, and so refused to accept some counterdrug funds in 1990. General Accounting Office, The Drug War, US Progress in Peru Faces Serious Obstacles, " Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 18.

measures of success in the drug war, for example, the amounts of cocaine seized or persons arrested, but these measures are important only in relation to the total cocaine produced or the size of the criminal enterprise infrastructure, which are unknown. The important question is how much cocaine was not seized. "The amount of cocaine base seized throughout Peru in 1990 was about 4 metric tons, or about 1 week's production in one town in the Upper Huallaga Valley."<sup>14</sup> The best measure of effectiveness is the estimated cultivation of coca, the starting point of cocaine. "According to State's testimony during the fiscal year 1988 foreign assistance hearings, the least expensive way to keep drugs out of the US is to eradicate the illicit crops."<sup>15</sup>

Table 2

Drug Statistics<sup>16</sup>  
(hectares)

	<u>1991</u>	<u>1990</u>	<u>1989</u>	<u>1988</u>	<u>1987</u>
<u>Bolivia</u>					
Gross Cultivation	55,600	58,400	55,400	50,400	41,400
Eradication	7,000	8,100	2,500	1,475	1,040
<u>Colombia</u>					
Gross Cultivation	40,900	41,000	43,040	34,230	22,960
Eradication	2,500	900	640	230	450
<u>Peru</u>					
Gross Cultivation	120,800	121,300	121,685	115,530	109,155
Eradication	-	0	1,285	5,130	355

Additionally, the price of cocaine and its purity on the national

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<sup>14</sup> GAO, Peru, 20.

<sup>15</sup> General Accounting Office, Drug Control, How Drug-Consuming Nations are Organized for the War on Drugs, June 1990, Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 44.

<sup>16</sup> Extracts from Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, March 1991, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office.

range is about the same in 1992 as it was in 1989.<sup>17</sup>

## V. Analysis

A. The strategy is ineffective. Although there are some favorable trends, it does not appear that the strategy to reduce the supply of drugs "at the source" is effective, especially considering the substantial amounts of funds being spent. A rationally based policy should maximize strategic goals and objectives. It should be changed if it is ineffective.

There are several reasons common among the Andean nations that explain the ineffectiveness of the strategy. Host nations are not proficient at maintaining effective coordination and control of law enforcement forces, political instability caused by insurgency lowers the priority of counterdrug operations, extensive corruption taints law enforcement, and most importantly, Andean economies are heavily dependent upon coca leaf production.<sup>18</sup> These problems undermine the DoD strategy of enhancing law enforcement capability, and are systematic problems unlikely to be soon ameliorated. Providing defense goods, services, and training is of no use in reducing corruption, building political infrastructure, or improving economic conditions. Even economic support has not made a significant reduction in cocaine supply. In short, good money is

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<sup>17</sup> The ranges per kilogram: \$11,000-35,000 (1989) to 11,000-42,000 (1992); 87% pure (1989) to 84% (1992). Department of Justice, Illegal Drug Price/Purity Report, November 1992, Washington D.C., Drug Enforcement Administration, 1.

<sup>18</sup> GAO, Peru, 27; DOS, International Narcotics Control, 80, 95, 114; GAO, How Drug Consuming Nations are Organized, 44.



being thrown after bad - the strategy is not accomplishing the objective of reducing the production and transshipment of cocaine to the US.

There are alternatives to the current strategy. Greater emphasis could be placed on resolving the socioeconomic problems that make coca leaf production attractive to farmers. Emphasis could be shifted to demand reduction programs. Defense against smuggling at the borders or in transit to the US could be expanded.

B. Why hasn't the strategy changed? Graham Allison explains governmental policy choices and strategies under three different models.<sup>19</sup> In spite of a reasonable expectation that strategy decisions are based upon a rational choice (Model I), the organizational process paradigm (Model II) and bureaucratic politics (Model III) better explain the policy and the failure to change it.

Model II explains governmental choices as organizational outputs that are based upon routines and previously established procedures. These procedures present the effective options open to government leaders confronted with a problem. In order to understand policy decisions, governmental organizations and players must be understood. Model III focuses on bureaucratic politics and explains governmental action as a political resultant. Most importantly, Model III recognizes that decisions are based upon parochial priorities, power, and perception of decision makers.

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<sup>19</sup> Graham Allison, Essence of Decision - Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis. (New York: Harper Collins, 1971).

C. Who are the major organizational and political players? The Office of the DoD Coordinator for Drug Enforcement Policy and Support (DEP&S), a political appointee, was established in 1989, and played a major role in developing and drafting SecDef's drug strategy. Among other things, it develops DoD policy on providing military support.<sup>20</sup>

The military coordinator for security assistance for the Andean Ridge nations is the Commander in Chief, U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM), located in Panama. The war on drugs has brought SOUTHCOM new prestige and importance. One of its main missions is nation building using security assistance. It also provides operational support to law enforcement, for example, the Drug Enforcement Agency, in Andean nations.<sup>21</sup>

The operational conduit between SOUTHCOM and the DoD agencies is the Counternarcotics Operations Division (CNOD) of the Operations Directorate (J-3), Joint Staff. It was created in late 1989 to coordinate the military's participation in the war on drugs.

If change in SecDef's strategy to attack drugs at their source were to be forthcoming, it should originate with those organizations. But several organizational and bureaucratic issues make it unlikely that the strategy will change.

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<sup>20</sup> Col David Shull, Legal Coordinator for the Office of the DoD Coordinator of Drug Enforcement Policy and Support, telephone interview. 16 Dec. 1992.

<sup>21</sup> General George Joulwan, CINCSOUTHCOM, address, Nontraditional Roles of the Military Conference, National Defense University, Washington, 2 Dec. 1992.

#### D. Organizational Process

1. When SECDEF made his choice on how to attack drugs at their source, the possibility of providing economic reform for the Andean Ridge nations was not an option because there is no DoD organization that deals in that specialty. On the other hand, it does have an organization - DSAA - which was established during the cold war to provide defense services and equipment, and training to friendly nations. It is therefore not surprising that military security assistance is a part of the strategy. It is the most appropriate program in the organization's repertoire.<sup>22</sup>

2. The implementation of the strategy is well within DSAA's and SOUTHCOM's normal routine. Their internal organizations and procedures to plan and coordinate the delivery of military security assistance are well-established. Additionally, the opportunity to provide security assistance training is generally viewed by the services as a broadening experience of benefit to the individual trainers, and is a fairly low risk, routine undertaking. Security assistance may be the easiest way to support the war without being involved in the fight.

3. The budgeting procedure for security assistance is fairly inflexible. A change in strategy would require a change in appropriations and authorizations which are planned each fiscal year long before the assistance is to be delivered. Considering that security assistance is a grant program, there is substantial competition for funds, and a change in strategy may make future

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<sup>22</sup> Allison, Essence, 83.

funding more difficult to obtain. Resistance to change is likely. Organizational budgets change by increments, and large budgetary shifts between organizations, as would be called for in emphasizing socioeconomic reform, are not favored.

#### E. Bureaucratic Politics

1. A change in policy may result in a decrease in political importance of involved organizations. Along with the responsibility of military security assistance comes a substantial counternarcotics budget and the prestige associated with leading the attack on drugs at their source, which SOUTHCOM, CNOD, and DEP&S would be reluctant to forfeit. Shifting the emphasis to economic reform or another alternative strategy may shift power and influence to AID, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Customs Service, or some other supported agency. Where you stand depends on where you sit.

2. The DoD Coordinator for DEP&S has a personal stake in the success of the drug strategy since he was involved in its creation. He will be reluctant to admit the strategy is a failure.<sup>23</sup>

VI. Conclusion. To achieve the objective of reducing the amount of drugs available in the US, SecDef's counterdrug strategy includes attacking drugs at their source by enhancing Andean Ridge nations' ability to stop drug trafficking and production within their borders. Because of corruption, political instability, and

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<sup>23</sup> This problem may diminish with the arrival of a new administration.

economic dependence on coca leaf production, and in spite of substantial economic and military aid, the strategy has failed.

The apparently rational selection of the security assistance-based strategy may instead have resulted from an organizational bias for security assistance. Organizational process and bureaucratic politics resist change. Government decisions are not always rational choices.